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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Representative Mark Spreitzer statement on UW-System funding for agriculture educators**

MADISON- Today, State Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit), along with his Democratic colleagues in the legislature, sent letters to Governor Walker and UW System President Ray Cross expressing their concerns with recent cuts to UW-Extension agriculture educator position funding in Wisconsin.

“Only three years after Governor Walker slashed UW System funding, rural communities and farmers are seeing the negative effects,” said Rep. Spreitzer. “By reducing the availability of local agriculture educators, farmers stand to lose a valuable source of research and expertise to enhance their output. These cuts were at best shortsighted, and at worst, an attempt to further erode the Wisconsin Idea by preventing research done at the University of Wisconsin from being available to our local communities and farmers.”

In his 2015-17 budget, Governor Walker cut \$250 million from the UW-System. In response, UW System announced they would restructure their organization as a means of cost savings. Unfortunately, UW System did not adequately sound the alarm on some of the practical effects of its restructuring. UW System waited until after counties completed their budget process, and until after the legislature had adjourned, before notifying multiple counties in Southwest Wisconsin that they would not be receiving full-time agriculture educators this year.

“These positions are vital in rural communities, but with county budgets wrapped up and the legislature having concluded its work for the session, we may be out of options to ensure additional funding,” Spreitzer added. “Sadly, this could have all been prevented by sounding the alarm earlier.”

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#### **45<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT**

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